Module 3, Lesson 3
MILITARY COMPONENT
CHILD PROTECTION
ACTION AND RESPONSE
Learning Objectives

• **Demonstrate** how the mission rules of engagement provide military peacekeepers with the authority and tools to effectively protect children;

• **Define** child soldiers and discuss the challenges they pose;

• **Apply** the guidelines for dealing with child soldiers;

• **Demonstrate** the range of appropriate military actions in response to grave violations against children.
Two Responses to Threats to Children

**PROTECT**
Actions to physically protect children

Military POC plans based on four phases of response and rules of engagement

**REPORT**
Information on the six grave violations

Report and refer situations to child protection actors
Security Council resolution 2514 (2020)

South Sudan

8. Decides that the mandate of UNMISS shall be as follows, and authorizes UNMISS to use all necessary means to perform the following tasks:

(a) Protection of civilians:

(i) To protect civilians under threat of physical violence, irrespective of the source of such violence, within its capacity and areas of deployment, with specific protection for women and children...
Rules of Engagement (1)

• Mission rules of engagement are developed by the Department of Peace Operations (DPO);
• They provide parameters within which peacekeepers may use different levels of force;
• They ensure that the use of force is undertaken in accordance with the purpose of the mandate, and the principles of international humanitarian law;
• Missions with a protection mandate have robust ROEs which authorizes military peacekeepers to use force – including deadly force – to protect civilians, including children, from physical violence.
Rules of Engagement (2)

Duty to use minimum and proportionate force

• This does not prevent the immediate use of deadly force if the threat to life is imminent, and there is no alternative to remove that threat;

• The use of force should be commensurate with the level of the threat;

• However, the level of response may have to be higher in order to minimize UN and civilian casualties.
Under imminent threat...

- The term “imminent” is not bound by time or geographic location;
- A threat of violence against civilians, including children, is imminent from the moment it is identified up to when the mission can determine that the threat no longer exists.

Terminology: Under Imminent Threat
Hostile intent and imminent threat…

Determining whether there is hostile intent or imminent threat should be based on one or a combination of *three factors* to be considered by the Commander on the scene:

1. *Capability and preparedness* of the threat;
2. *Evidence of the intention* to attack;
3. *Historical precedent* within the area of operations.
An Integrated Response

Don’t forget the other response. Once the immediate action is taken to prevent violations, you must think:

“Who do I inform?”
Grave Violations That You Are MOST LIKELY to Encounter

1. Recruitment or use of children
2. Killing and maiming
3. Rape and other sexual violence
4. Attacks on schools or hospitals
Review: *Child soldiers* may be used in various functions.
Review: Child soldiers may be used in various functions
Recruitment and Use (3)

*Why are children recruited and used by armed groups?*

They bring a strategic advantage!
Dealing with Child Soldiers (1)

If they pose a threat,

- Be prepared to deal with such situations;
- The principles on the use of force in peacekeeping operations and the mission rules of engagement must be thoroughly understood by all.
Dealing with Child Soldiers (2)

• **Prepare in advance for such situations**

Faced with an imminent threat of violence from child combatants, you may have to use force to protect yourself, your unit, other components or civilians. Such a situation:

– poses a moral dilemma;
– may cause you to panic and lead to traumatic stress.

• **Training and awareness are essential**
Dealing with Child Soldiers (3)

If they do not pose a threat, remember:

- Children are victims;
- Do no harm;
- Report through the chain of command and to the mission Child Protection Adviser;

- Provide for a safe transfer to specialized agencies that take care of child soldiers.
Dealing with Child Soldiers

SCENARIO 1

While patrolling the area, you encounter four child soldiers from a known faction guarding a checkpoint utilizing an improvised roadblock. They refuse to allow you freedom of movement, and demand that all “living things” must pay a “road tax”. They seem intoxicated.

How would you respond and why?
Dealing with Child Soldiers

SCENARIO 2

As you are patrolling the area, you notice a child with a weapon moving aggressively toward you.

How would you respond and why?
Dealing with Child Soldiers

SCENARIO 3
While on patrol, you encounter a child soldier who has escaped from his captors. He asks you for help.

How would you respond and why?
SCENARIO 4
As a contingent officer in the mission, you often meet with the host State’s forces in your area of responsibility. On your way to meet with the Commander, you encounter a checkpoint with 10 host-State soldiers. It is apparent that two of the soldiers are children.

How would you handle this situation?
Negotiating the Release of Child Soldiers

• If possible, ensure that the negotiation is being conducted by a Child Protection Adviser;

• If a child soldier seeks spontaneous demobilization in the field, he/she must always be accommodated, regardless of whether child protection personnel are present;

• Child Protection Advisers must be informed immediately;

• Children should be handed over to Child Protection Advisers as soon as possible.
Killing and Maiming

SCENARIO 5

You are a UNMO Team Leader deployed in a remote area of the mission. Yesterday, one of your patrols discovered a minefield close to a local village in your area of responsibility. You are worried that the local population, in particular children, might enter the minefield by accident and get seriously injured or killed.

What actions would you take to ensure the protection of children in the area concerned?
SCENARIO 6

You have been informed that an armed faction, which is opposed to the peace process and hostile to the United Nations, has carried out attacks in a remote part of your area of responsibility near the border. You decide to deploy a mobile operating base (MOB) in the area. When the Company arrives in the village, the Chief points out a prime location in a primary school and offers the premises as the MOB/TOB. 

(contd. on next slide)
What instructions would you give the Company Commander and why?

What difference would it make if the Chief had offered a hospital as the base for the MOB?

What if the host State’s forces that are fighting with the faction are based in the school, and invite the Company to join them in a joint operation?
SCENARIO 7

While on patrol, a Company Commander meets with host-State forces in a village. They inform him that they have captured and detained 12 soldiers from a rebel armed group that has been terrorizing the village. The detainees have been locked up in one crowded cell for one week awaiting transfer to the capital for interrogation. The Company Commander notices that three of the detainees are very young, and possibly one is female. Two of the young detainees have gunshot wounds.

How would you handle this situation?
**Child Soldiers – Other Issues**

**Arrest and detention of child soldiers**

- Only in the most extreme circumstances;
- Hand them over to a child protection actor as soon as possible.

**DDR of children**

- Many missions have a DDR mandate;
- The DDR Section will define your specific tasks.
Taking Action, Reporting – Other Violations

• Be aware of other violations relevant to the particular context (e.g., illegal detention, forced displacement, trafficking);

• Ask the Child Protection Adviser for a briefing on the situation of children affected by armed forces in your particular context;

• Make sure that you fully understand the violations that you are expected to report.
Additional Considerations for UN Military

- Ensure that schools and other educational institutions are not used or impacted when planning/conducting military operations;
- Ensure that the standard operating procedures (SOPs) for dealing with children in custody are known by all personnel;
- All possible efforts should be made to avoid civilian casualties, in particular child casualties.
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<tr>
<th><strong>Do</strong></th>
<th><strong>Don’t</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Assist child soldiers when they surrender or are captured</td>
<td>Send a child/children away or tell them to come back the next day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inform the mission CPA and hand them over to the nearest child protection actor as soon as possible</td>
<td>Hand a child/children over to the host-State army without consulting the Child Protection Section</td>
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<td>Share your knowledge of child protection issues with national military counterparts</td>
<td>Underestimate your role as a positive role model</td>
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<td>Encourage the host-State army not to use schools as bases for their operations</td>
<td>Use schools or hospitals as bases for military operations</td>
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Takeaways

• Protection of children is an integral part of the overall mission mandate.
• Rules of engagement provide the authority to use force, if deemed necessary, to protect children.
• The handling of child soldiers is complex and requires training.
• Bear in mind two key considerations:
  – Take action to address child protection threats;
  – Inform child protection actors of violations.
• Hand over child soldiers to child protection actors as soon as possible.
References

• OSRSG-CAAC website (http://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org)
Review the Rules of Engagement
Questions